

# STONE WALLS



Ellie Lazarus, who is the spokesman for *Stone Walls*, is having a fabulous trip of discovery in the Pacific. So I am pinch-hitting for her this one time. What I want to say is that *Stone Walls* is a unique venture: a truly creative experience for many people in our hill towns, a truly community venture. It is creative for all those who have written of their memories and ideas, of people they know or the things they do, and have the satisfaction of seeing their work in print. It is creative for those who find pleasure in reading these same pieces. It is excitingly creative for those who put the magazine together, and for the printers who are themselves hill town people. We think it is a great experience and we hope you do, too.

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Ida Joslyn", with a horizontal line extending from the end of the signature.

STONE WALLS

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\*Student article



*Montgomery Community Church*

# The Church on the Hill

*by Jerry Noble*

Imagine, if you will, a small white church nestled in early fall foliage, a sign on the front lawn proclaiming modestly, "Montgomery Community Church - Worship Service 10:00." A few brave voices are filling the morning air with the strains of "Come to the church in the wildwood, O, come to the church on the hill..." accompanied by timid background chords and booming bass of an organ. Across the road, Montgomery's main street, children are playing outside the town hall prior to attending their weekly Sunday School lessons. "No spot is so dear to my childhood..." greets us as we enter the narthex, a little areaway no bigger than a generous kitchen. The minister, a tall man with an almost permanent smile on his countenance, shakes our hands before proceeding, with the ceremony due his position, down the aisle to the altar. We follow uncertainly and take our seats in the empty rearmost pew. Faces turned toward us smile amiably, and we, reassured, settle back comfortably as the first hymn ends and the minister begins his morning prayer.

We sink into a reverie after the next hymn. Here begins our journey back into the beginnings of all this...

"Know all men by these presents that I, Oren Parks of Montgomery in the county of Hampden and Commonwealth of Massachusetts, acting for and in behalf of the town of Montgomery, being authorized by a vote of said town..." So, in part, reads the Church Deed - Montgomery in which the town of Montgomery, represented by Oren Parks, sold "in consideration of one hundred dollars" a small tract of land containing the steps and foundations of an old meetinghouse, erected in 1797 and

burnt to the ground sometime after that date, to the Congregational Society of Montgomery. The Society rebuilt the meetinghouse in 1848, but the deed, which showed their ownership of it was not officially registered until 1958. This lack of public record was unfortunate as it caused controversy over who owned the church, the town, or the Congregational Society.

The newly-built meetinghouse was used to its fullest. People arrived in buckboard, buggy, and trap or on foot in their Sunday best. From 1918-1934, the Reverend Charles H. Chapin drove down from Norwich Hill every Sunday afternoon after conducting the service at his own church, and acted full-time pastor to the old meetinghouse. Those were the days when the front yard was parked to overflowing with horse and horseless carriage alike and people actually filled the balcony. But in 1934, the meetinghouse closed down and could not boast a full-time pastor for 24 years...

1956: the little church-meetinghouse had seen neither paint nor feather duster since the years 1949-1950 when pastor Alvah Rhines conducted Sunday evening services. Then the town suddenly decided it would reopen the old meetinghouse. At a cost of \$300 a new roof was put on and for \$200 the steeple was repaired. A year later, for another \$300, the church and all the public buildings were repainted with the assistance of the A.P. Pettis Fund. The next year, 1958, saw the interior improvement.

Now the good people needed a minister. They extended an invitation to the Reverend William J. Call, completing studies at Westminster Theological Seminary. He accepted and arrived in early spring to

inspect the premises. He pronounced the original organ beyond repair, which, of course, it was. He also noted that the piano, the only other instrument and therefore the only one possible to use, was out of tune. This situation was soon remedied when a deflated basketball was removed from the piano's innards. Later, in August, Reverend Call was married and introduced his new wife, Margaret, in Montgomery.

Next came an organist. Mr. Call visited my father, who had moved to Montgomery from Springfield in 1949, to play for the church. He agreed to play for a few weeks until they found somebody permanent. They never did, and he would still be playing every Sunday if illness hadn't moved him back to choir director and me up to organist.

By August, they were all set for the dedication service...and was *it* a service! The little building was bulging at the seams with folks in the pews, folks in the balcony, and folks standing in the back. A capacity crowd of 120 people came to hear Reverend Call preach.

From then on things went fine, even though Mr. Call left with his wife for missionary work in Algiers. The Reverend Dr. Teale, who grew up in Wales in the

British Isles and started preaching in Canada, the Reverend Ristau and many other reverends and pastors passed our doors. A Sunday School was started. Boy Scouts met in the Town Hall. Chicken Pie and Pot Luck suppers flourished. A new organ was donated. Then came transition. We had to decide between two ministers as our former one had been offered a better job. We chose Frederic P. Hewitt, Lay Pastor and he has been with us over five years.

Yes, there he is...the last hymn has just been sung and Mr. Hewitt is giving a benediction. Now he passes us on his way to the narthex. The congregation sings their response and begins to file out to the music of a rousing postlude. Little knots of friends gather to discuss events of the past week and we walk out the front door after shaking the minister's hand again. As we look back, could it be? A bearded man, Charles Chapin, shaking hands on the front steps - ladies in long flowing gowns being helped into buggies and perhaps Mr. Allyn in his new buckboard cracking his whip in earnest, rolling away down the road. No, it couldn't be now, but it was then and the ghosts may still be there, who can tell?

\* \* \*



# Model T

*by Geoff Lynes*

Some of the early cars were not as much of a luxury as you might think. They had a chronic case of the flat tire. They did not always start very easily without an electric starter. The Model T didn't know that there was a tree in the way, as a horse would, so costly repairs were often needed.

The Model T cost three hundred and twenty-five dollars which was more than some people made in a year. The average wage for hired hands then was about six hundred dollars a year. Three hundred and twenty-five dollars now seems like nothing for a new car, but then it wasn't just petty cash. It was a small fortune, but a fortune well spent because a Model T lasted.

To this day, they are still around. Joe Mattis, from Windsor, has a 1923 Model T Depot Hack. A Depot Hack was used mostly by hotels to first bring up guests from Pittsfield and then to go back and get their trunks and bags after the seats were taken out. This old car has thirty-three horsepower which is mini compared to modern cars, most of which now have about one hundred and fifty horsepower. Better gas alone has increased the horsepower in the old car a very noticeable amount. "With a better grade of gas, my Model T will climb right up Windsor Hill in high gear with no problem. Before, I sometimes had to shift to low to get home," says Joe Mattis.

The basic design of the engine has not changed much but there are some differences. One difference between the Model T and any modern car is that the Model T has four coils, one for each cylinder as opposed to one for all four, six, or eight cylinders. This was a problem horsepower - wise because with four different

coils there was an uneven spark which threw the engine off balance. This brought about a loss of horsepower and made the car hard to start.

The electric starter came in as an option in 1919. Before that, people used a crank which resulted in many broken wrists because if the motor backfired it would snap the crank back and hit the cracker's wrist with the force of a bull's kick in fly season, but the Model T didn't have the pull of a bull.

The Model T had what was called a Planetary Transmission which is more or less the same as the automatic transmission but it is shifted differently. There are three pedals on the car floor: one for the brake, one for reverse, and one for low gear. When the driver got the car started, he would push the low gear pedal to the floor. Once the car got up speed, he would let it out which would shift the car into high gear which was comparatively low power on high speed.

Even in low gear early cars didn't have the power to spin their wheels and leave rubber. Nevertheless, with Model T's nobody went anywhere without planning on a flat tire or two. Tires were so flimsy that a trip from Windsor to Adams would sometimes entail six or seven flat tires. Tires back then were not only made badly, they were also quite expensive at twenty dollars each. They ran about 5,000 miles without too many problems. After that point, they started to go bad, one after another.

A Model T would slow down a lot just from another person riding in the car. A Model T can go up Windsor Hill at about twenty miles per hour. With one extra

person, it would slow down to about fifteen miles per hour. But for a small engine that was doing quite well.

On a long trip with a lot of steep hills, the driver also had to be careful about his gas. The construction of the Model T was such that the carburetor was lower than the gas tank. Going up a hill could be quite a chore as the gas wouldn't reach the carburetor because of its gravity feed fuel system. The driver had literally to back up the hill so that the gas would flow into the carburetor.

When cars were first built, they didn't have any defrosters. Some owners would light a candle and stick it to the dashboard to melt the ice on the windshield. But usually they would not have their cars out in the winter. They would put them on blocks as soon as the snow came, and use their horses and sleighs instead. Roads were not plowed but rolled down. This was fine for sleighs, but impossible for cars.

Before the Model T came around, there was the stage. To go from Dalton to Cummington, a stage took all day by way of old Route 9. Route 9 wasn't always in the same place. It used to run all over the countryside. It went down through East Windsor, then up and over to West Cummington. By no means was Route 9 always blacktop. Before the state and federal government had road funds, Route 9 used to be oil and sand. In every section house there would be fifteen to twenty piles of sand and each of the men had to spread his own share of sand when the oil truck came through. This was a spectacle in itself. Route 9 was changed to blacktop in 1921-26.

Cars were still so rare in 1915 that there was what was called a jitney, which was a Model T that ran from Cummington to Williamsburg to haul passengers and their packages. The fare was one dollar per person. Because of the jitney's route, the

first gas station came to Cummington in 1915. At that point, gas was sixteen cents per gallon. To get to the gas station people had to use one of two bridges.



*Model T circa 1915*

Bridges in those days were not exactly seaworthy. In the hurricane of 1938 a lot of bridges met their deaths. The covered bridge in Cummington was up-rooted and washed down-stream into another bridge in lower Cummington. The lower bridge was so badly cracked that it was condemned. Much to the safety commission's displeasure, people still had to get around, crack or no crack. So that bridge had to be torn down and rebuilt before winter.



*The Covered Bridge in Cummington*

At first school busses were your own two feet, then sleighs, then horseless carriages. The first school bus in Windsor was a solid tired Model T. In the winter when the bus was coming up Windsor Hill, it would start spinning. The driver told everybody to get out and push. Everybody would get out and push back so they wouldn't have to go to school. The bus would have to turn around and take everybody home. But Florence

Streeter spoiled everyone's fun when she came home after one of these episodes and happened to tell her mother about it. She didn't intend to ruin things for her school bus companions, it just slipped out in the conversation. Her mother told the bus driver and that blew everything out the window.

There was no such thing as driver's education taught in school in those days. In 1915, there was no need for drivers' education. People used to have someone vouch to the effect that such and such a person would write a letter to Boston and so get a license.

Unfortunately, today people don't see many Model T's or, for that matter, any old cars because restoring them is a big job. There is no way for anyone to write to

Henry Ford to get any specifications for restoring. When Mr. Mattis restored his Model T, he had to guess at the measurements for the roof to the best of his knowledge because the Ford Company never made the tops. They had a carriage company make the tops, and that company is long gone.

We can look back and appreciate the simplicity of getting a license and the minimal traffic. But who wants to spend their time fixing flat tires, or breaking their wrists, or backing up hills? At the same time, the Model T did have its advantages over the horse and buggy. You couldn't get kicked in the face by a tire; you didn't have to muck out the garage; and you didn't get saddlesores from the seats.



*"Going up a hill was quite a chore"*

*Drawing by Natalie Birrell*

# Reminiscences

by Ethel M. Pease

No family history would be complete without mentioning some of the pets that were important members of the household. One of the early recollections of the Henry Pease family concerns a St. Bernard dog named Prince, brought on the train from Westfield. As a puppy, he was a great source of fun and trouble, and when he grew older and bigger he would be hitched up like a horse and join the children in romping around the kitchen and yard. On one occasion, he chose to plunge through the bottom of the screen door with his driver, probably Francis, in hot pursuit. As Mother observed the chaos, she exclaimed in anguish and despair, "I'll be so thankful when you kids grow up!" Then there was Laddie Boy, born in Argentia, Newfoundland. When Janet and Chuck returned to the United States, they shipped Laddie by rail and ship freight to Boston, Mass. Even though the crate was plainly marked Chester, Mass., poor Laddie arrived in Chelsea, Mass., and became very hungry and thirsty before his owners discovered his whereabouts. In spite of this mishap, Laddie lived to a ripe old age. A pair of ducks, given to Janet one spring, proved to be a most devoted and inseparable couple. When a bridal shower was given for Hazel Boyer, Mama Duck was dressed in a floating veil attached to her head with a corsage of zinnias on her chest, while Papa Duck was fitted to a black tuxedo pinned around his body and topped off by a bow tie around his neck. The pair was released on the lawn just as the bride-to-be was opening her gifts. Needless to say, the ducks stole the show as they paraded about, Papa in the lead and Mama right behind. Of all the pets - dogs, cats, ponies, etc., probably the most unique was

George, a baby raccoon purchased by Howard at a pet store. About the size of a small kitten when he arrived, George rapidly adjusted to a diet of milk, dog food, and peanuts. He would crawl into people's laps and sit on their shoulders. Being a nocturnal creature, he usually slept most of the day and spent the night prowling about. Even though Timmy, whose bedroom George chose as his headquarters, was awakened by the animal's chittering and chattering, he hated to curtail the pet's activities. Finally George heard the "call of the wild" and disappeared when fall came, but the next spring a family of raccoons appeared at the back door looking for food. Maybe George had brought his family to visit the scenes of his youth.

In matters of comfort and convenience, the homes of this period lacked many devices and gadgets considered necessary today. Without central heating or electricity, there was more "togetherness", as only one or two rooms were heated by a Glenwood or Home Comfort stove. Bed-rooms were usually unheated unless they happened to be connected by registers to the rooms below. Soapstones or hot water bottles helped to remove the iciness from the unheated beds. Everyone wore long underwear and flannel nightgowns, at night, and the same long johns by day, plus a great assortment of long black stockings, high laced shoes, tippets, tam o' shanters, stocking caps, sheepskin coats, and furlined caps and mittens. Electricity came to Westfield about 1922 and to Middlefield about 1934. The lines were installed in Bancroft first and then in the Center. Families living on the outskirts had to pay for the installation of the line,

usually \$500 a year for two or three years. The changeover from kerosene lamps and lanterns was a memorable occasion. The gasoline engine used for running machines was replaced by an electric motor.

Automobiles began to appear about 1910, one of the first being a Stanley Steamer. The Henry Pease family acquired their first car, a Model T Ford, in 1923. When the question arose as to how to drive it, Donald, then aged 14, offered this suggestion, "Doesn't the book tell how to drive it?" Francis became the first operator and Donald followed soon after. Before the automobile arrived, transportation depended on horses and oxen. Standard equipment in most families included some or all of the following: a buggy, a Congress wagon with a heavy frame and two seats, a surrey, and a carriage, besides heavy wagons and a dump cart. A pair of work horses and an extra driving horse met the family needs. In case of illness before the installation of the telephone about 1906, someone drove to the doctor's, about an hour's journey, notified him of the illness, or if he was away left word. If anyone in town knew the doctor was coming, that person usually sent word to any other sick people and made arrangements for the doctor to visit them. The stork usually made home deliveries with the aid of a doctor, nurse, or neighbor. If there were older children, they became baby sitters and general helpers.

Around 1930, during the spring mud season, before the Middlefield section of the Chester road became an improved highway, going to Springfield via Chester was an experience requiring both fortitude and perseverance. During one Easter vacation, Jessie and Ethel Pease embarked on such a trip to attend a musical extravaganza in the city. About 5 P.M. they set forth on foot dressed in high boots and equipped with a rope, a lantern, an axe,

and a lunch, to walk across the mud flats below the Dyer farm and down the upper part of Chester Hill to pick up the family car parked at the top of the main hill, as the Chester side had been improved and was passable. They drove the 35 miles to Springfield, saw the show (they can't remember what it was) and at 11 P.M. began the return trip, going up Route 20 as far as BonnyRigg Four Corners in Becket, then proceeding on Route 8 to Hinsdale and finally taking the Skyline Trail back to Middlefield, a round trip of about 100 miles. They reached home about 1:30 A.M. and didn't plan any more such excursions for a long time thereafter.

Most of the members of the earlier generations attended one or two room schoolhouses, to which they walked unless the weather was too inclement. Olive Pease recalls walking two miles to the Union Street school and three miles to a new and larger school. The Lymans went to the school in Chester Center, while the Middlefield contingents went to the Pease or Center school. The teachers of these schools had to be experts in discipline and organization in order to teach reading, writing, spelling, arithmetic, history, and geography to all eight grades during a school day, beginning at 8 A.M. and ending by 3 P.M. Music and art were taught by special teachers who made the rounds about twice a month. Recesses and lunch periods were the high spots of the day. One tale is told about an ingenious youth who thought taking a goat to a high school class would enliven the routine. His identity is not revealed, as his children might be disillusioned in their belief that pop could do no wrong.

Only serious accidents or illness required hospital treatment. Olive remembers the time her mother broke her arm as she was walking down the hill from Birchmont to visit Mildred Pease who was in the hospital following an attack of

appendicitis. After she got up from her fall, she walked to the Springfield Road, took the trolley to Westfield, and asked Kenneth Pease to leave his job at the garage long enough to take her over to the hospital. While her mother was incapacitated Olive had to bake bread (6 loaves twice a week) and several pies, quite a challenge for an amateur cook. When Francis had appendicitis, he was rushed to Noble Hospital by Dr. Logie. When Grace Pease went to visit him, one of the neighbors loaned her a long coonskin coat, which she was afraid to wear because someone might think the Peases were rich.

Escapades were experienced by nearly every adventurous youth. Francis Pease and Donald Pease had a rather frightening lesson when they learned first hand about the explosive power of fire and kerosene. To heat the water for the cattle, a small woodburning stove was placed in the barnyard water tank. Since they wanted to encourage the smoldering embers, they poured a fairly large amount of kerosene on the coals. A sudden burst of flame and smoke erupted from the small smokestack and singed the hair, eyebrows, and eyelashes of the curious boys. At first it was thought that their eyesight might have been affected, but the prompt help of Mrs. Arthur Pease, a neighbor, saved them from any serious aftereffects. Fourth of July was anticipated as one of the most exciting days of the year. Firecrackers, caps, torpedoes, Roman candles and sparklers provided the chief attractions. Usually the young people couldn't wait for daybreak so that they could begin setting off the firecrackers and couldn't wait for evening so they could watch the sparklers and candles. Once, when Ethel and Francis wanted to test the explosive power of a large number of caps, they underestimated the terrific noise and stinging powder burns which resulted. Since they had been warned of

the danger of lockjaw, they sat in complete dejection as they planned their funeral and wondered if they would be missed. Maybe the ban on fireworks was a wise measure after all. Olive recalls as the "red letter days" of her youth the times when they visited Forest Park, Hampden Pond or the circus. When the blueberries were ripe, the family would board the trolley for Huntington where they were met by the Lymans and their team and transported to the blueberry patch. In those days, the trolleys used to run every hour, while the Boston and Albany railroad provided four trains a day in each direction. About once a year, some members of the Henry Pease family would drive a horse to Chester, leave the horse at Smithies' livery stable, or take the train to Springfield, visit the dentist or do whatever shopping could be accomplished before taking the 3 P.M. train home.

The *YOUTH'S COMPANION* was a young people's magazine which brought a variety of reading matter and most alluring advertisements. Ethel Pease recalls sending for handcraft kits, puzzles and cloth remnants, while Francis thought quick and easy wealth would be his if he sent for a collection of newspapers and magazines. In due time, a massive fifty pound bundle of reading matter arrived at the Pease home. Of course, Francis was as surprised as his parents, but he felt they wouldn't object if he could sell his material. Unfortunately, no one was interested in purchasing the *CHICAGO TIMES*, the *SAN FRANCISCO SENTINEL* or the *POLICE GAZETTE*. When the next shipment came, Francis was advised in no certain terms to cancel the order and revert to slower and safer methods of getting rich.

After the chores were done, there was usually time for some diversion or change of pace. Since Francis and Donald thought speed and an element of danger would

provide the desired thrill, they remodeled an old buggy by removing part of the body and using boards for a seat. They attached a rope to the axle, using the rope to steer or pull the vehicle. As the higher ground in front of the barn made a good starting point, they would begin their ride at that point and proceed down the crossroad, which had an almost vertical descent at the point known as

Churchill Hill. Clyde Jones and Francis were the passengers when they had their final ride down this steepest slope. Their choice lay between partial disaster in the brush beside the road or possible complete demolition at the bottom of the hill. They chose the brush and wrecked the buggy, but emerged with only a few minor cuts and bruises. As you can see those "good old days" were not so dull after all.

\* \* \*

## Skunk's Grease

*by Alice Britton*

Did I ever tell you the story about SKUNK'S GREASE? Well, there were a few families in Russell who believed in the therapeutic powers of grease from skunks to relieve the congestion of a bad cold and bronchitis. It was warmed and rubbed on the chest, covered with a warm flannel cloth, and in bad cases it was administered by the spoonful with a little sugar to help it down.

As you might imagine, we small children just figured that when Mrs. Loser came with her jar of grease she was bringing her friend the smelly skunk right along with her.

It is interesting to note that there were several men in town who knew how to extricate the fat from the skunk. Mr. Lewis Hull and John Spooner of Pomeroy Terrace and Mr. Thebodo, who was Mrs. Marie Hagues's father, were experts at the whole process. It seems that as people would kill a skunk - and they would kill a skunk for many reasons, such as because they are an

awful nuisance when they get to your chicken coop and mangle the hens, or pester your garbage cans - so as people would have a critter they would bring it to these men. They would then skin out the hide, tack it to a board, and scrape off its fat. Only about two tablespoons of clear white congealed grease was rendered from one skin, so you can see it took quite a few hides to get a jar of the precious grease.

I just barely remember once, when my sister Gert was real sick and Mrs. Loser was called in. They had to hold Gert's nose and poke it down her. I guess she thought the skunk came right along, also. It may seem funny in this day of modern medicine, but it wasn't that many years ago that country people had to rely on the old fashioned remedies that were passed down from generation to generation, a far cry from our modern methods today, but some old country doctors had faith in some of these homemade remedies. I guess they must have prayed a lot.

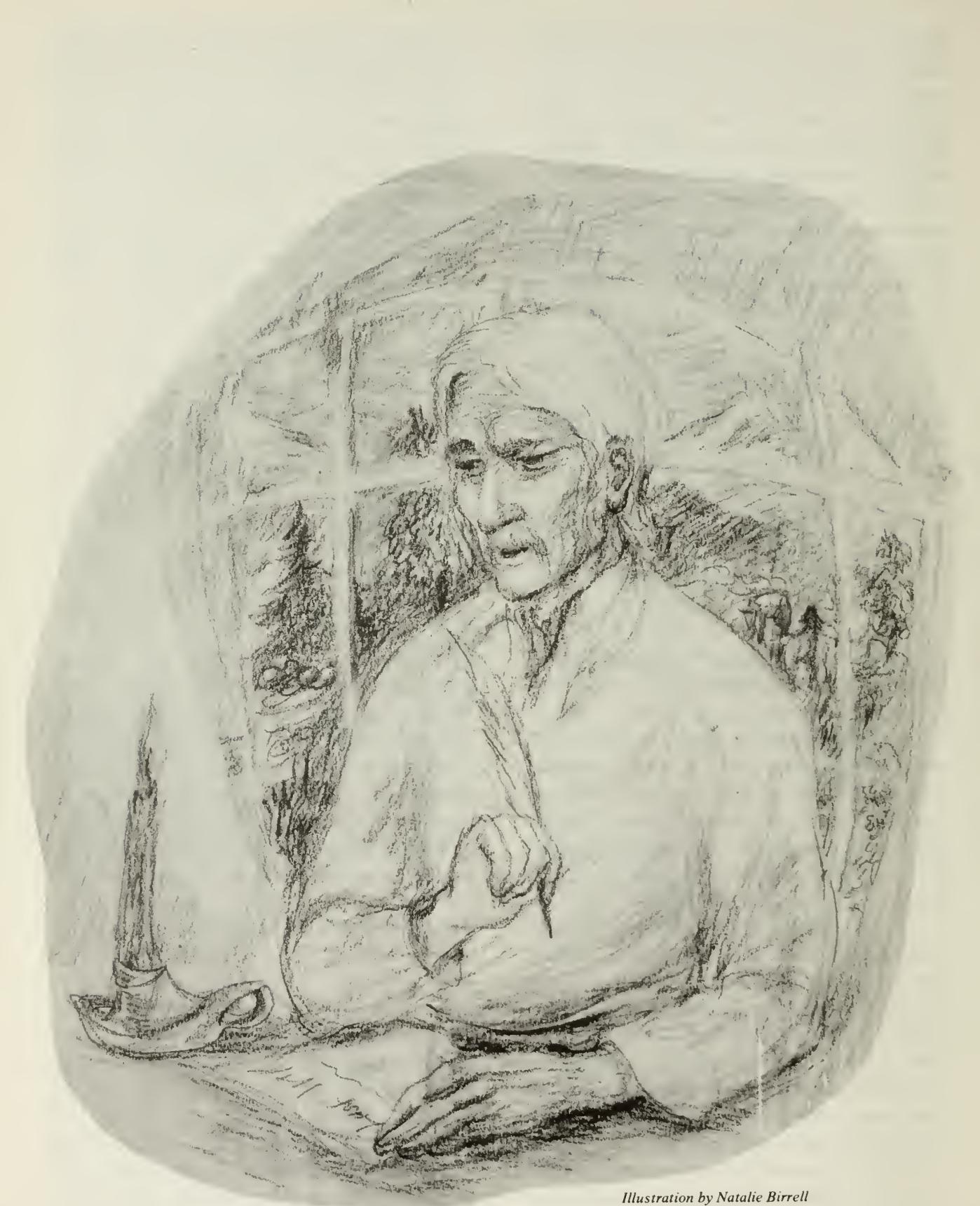


Illustration by Natalie Birrell

# The Last Decision - Right or Wrong

*Researched and written by  
Alice Coach and Redford King*

*Material for this article was furnished from parts of the Bosworth Genealogy. Although this is about a particular man, it is typical of the men who lived 200 years ago.*

How does a man decide how to leave his lifetime possessions? To understand Zadok Bosworth we list a few highlights of his life.

Zadok was a soldier in the French and Indian War. In August 1757, when nearly twenty-two, he did service for fourteen days at the time of the Alarm for the Relief of Fort William Henry.

Sometime previous to 1772, Zadok and his wife, Joanna, moved from New London to Southampton, Mass., for on July 22, 1772 he bought 63½ acres of land in Southampton and in the deed he is called "of Southampton." In 1778, during the Revolutionary War, Zadok was drafted for service, but at that time being 43 years old and not strong, his son, Zadok, Jr. then aged 17, went in his place.

November 28, 1780, parts of Westfield, Norwich and Southampton were incorporated as a new town of Montgomery. It is evident that Zadok lived in that part of Southampton taken to help form Montgomery, for "Montgomery Records of Town Affairs" states that certain men were ordered to "warn all Freeholders and other inhabitants of the said town that are qualified to vote in Town affairs to assemble and meet at the dwelling house of Mr. Zadok Bosworth in said town on

Thursday the 14th of this December Instant at 10 o'clock in the morning there to choose the Officers necessary to manage the affairs of said town, etc." In response to this call the meeting was held at Zadok's house, and when the officers were elected, Zadok was chosen one of the Surveyors of Highways, and Daniel Barrett (who later came Zadok's son-in-law by marrying his daughter Rebecca,) was made Town Clerk. From this time on Zadok was called "of Montgomery." The two meetings were to be held every other time at the home of Zadok.

April 4, 1781, the Annual Meeting was held there, also that of March 10, 1783, at which time Zadok was chosen constable. June 21, 1784 it was "voted to instruct Mr. Zadok Bosworth a collector of this Town to receive any kind of grain in pay of tax committed to him by the Assessors of this Town to collect support of the Gospel." December 4, 1787, Zadok, one of a committee of five to divide the town into school districts. March 3, 1788, Zadok chosen a "Fence Viewer," March 2, 1789, he was again chosen a "Surveyor of Highways." June 10, 1789, the town was divided into three districts for keeping "Pounds," and Zadok chosen a "Pound Keeper." January 18, 1790, "Voted that the Town allow Mr. Zadok Bosworth one shilling per day for victualling and attending on Mr. John Ballentine, those Sabbaths he preached in this town the

summer past."

March 4, 1790, Zadok bought of Ebenezer and Susanna Whipple of Stephentown, New York, 10 acres in Montgomery on the north of the highway. His son Joshua and son-in-law Daniel Barrett were witnesses. Later this same year Zadok sold to Daniel Barrett, called "Gentleman," 12 acres in Montgomery. Zadok called "yoeman." Gamaliel King, his son-in-law and Zadok, Jr. witnesses. January 31, 1793, Zadok sold 17 acres, part of it being part of the land bought of Ebenezer and Susanna Whipple at "Moose Meadow Corner". March 11, 1793, Zadok chosen a "Tything Man." June 26, 1793 he was chosen Surveyor of Highways in room of Noble Squires, and was again made tything man. January 19, 1802, Zadok, with his son Joshua and his sons-in-law Daniel Barrett and Gamaliel King and nine others, all of Montgomery, buy 72 acres of land in Montgomery "with Dwelling House, Barn and  $\frac{1}{4}$  share in a sawmill standing thereon for \$1,000." His son Raymond, one of the witnesses. This company sold this property December 11, 1805 for the same price to Phinehas Clapp, Jr.

On July 4, 1810, Zadok Bosworth made his will in which he bequeathed as follows: "First. I give and bequeath to my beloved wife Joanna Bosworth three rooms in the dwelling house viz. those rooms extending through the building...also one third part of the Barn together with the use of one third of the whole of my Real Estate of which I am now seized the whole of the foregoing to be for her use during her natural life, afterwards to descent to my son Raymond Bosworth. I also give my said wife two cows, four sheep, the Mare which I own at the date of these presents, one swine, together with all my household furniture and one third of the crops of all kinds now on the ground to be at her disposal. 2dly. I direct that whatever

Debts may be due from me to be paid to my personal estate and the remainder both real and personal to be disposed of in the following manner viz. To my son Joshua Bosworth I give Four dollars and to my four Daughters viz. Rebekah Barrett, Hannah Brant, Charlotte Moore, and Priscilla King I give and bequeath ten Dollars each - the foregoing Legacies to my several Children to be paid to them respectfully by my Executor out of my personal Estate within two years after my Decease to be in full with what they have already received of their shares of my estate.

The remainder of my estate both Real and Personal of what name or nature soever I give and bequeath to my son Raymond Bosworth and I do hereby constitute and appoint Daniel Barrett of this two sole executor of this my last will Testament."

This will was probated July 17, 1810. Daniel Barrett gave bonds for \$1,000.

Note: Zadok died the day after making his will, July 5, 1810, in his 75th year and was buried in Montgomery.

In the U.S. Census for 1810, Raymond was living in Montgomery with a family of 9, two sons, four daughters, himself and wife, and one other, a "Female of 45 and upwards" which must have been his mother Joanna, as his father died that same year and the two families had lived together before his death. (By consulting the will of his father, Zadok, it will be seen that Raymond was his chief beneficiary.) Raymond is found in the census of 1820 with a family of 7 and 1830 with only 4; all had m. and left home except Roswell, 22, and Betty, 18.

In 1802 and 1813 Raymond was witness to deeds given by, or in favor of, his brothers Zadok, Jr. and Joshua. In 1811 he deeded to his brother Zadok two pieces of land, 4 a. a little Nly. of the sd Zadok's dwelling house and 3 a. "being a part of a

lot of land my Hond Father purchased of Ebenezer Whipple and wife," adj. Zadok's own land. In 1824 he mort. his farm of 59 a. with the bldgs. which he had inherited from his father, for \$300 and two years later having fallen into some unknown difficulty, Jerome Topliff of Willington, Tolland Co., Conn.," recovered judgment against Ashbel Moody (who had been a witness to above mort.) and Raymond Bosworth for \$52.39" and the Sheriff sold the land to the highest bidder for \$100 subject to the above mortgage. This is the last real est. transaction found.

Zadok did his best to provide for his wife and to divide his treasured possessions among his family with the hope that his son, Raymond would carry on the farm and continue to build up his father's dream. It is sad to see that Raymond, because of ill fortune, lost that property. The amount involved seems small to us today, but at that time it was as unattainable as many thousands would be now. All anyone can do is try to leave one's precious goods and dreams as Zadok did, in the hope that they will continue on through many generations.

\* \* \*

## The Owl and the Duck

*by Dave Lynes*



*Drawing by Dave Lynes*

One day when I came home from school, my mother told me to put the three ducks into their pen. When I was putting them in, I noticed that one was missing. So I went looking for it. I found it with part of its head and all its neck meat gone. Then about five days later I woke up, went down stairs, and looked out the window. There sitting on a duck, was an owl.

I got dressed as fast as I could. I went out to scare the owl away with a stick. Then I went it. My father told me to go out and bring in the duck the owl had been sitting on. So I went out, got the duck, and brought it in and put it on a big wooden platter. Then he told me to go out and look for the third duck. All I found was a few feathers.

That same day, the owl came back to look for his food. So my father was going to scare it away for good. He was going to shoot a shotgun shell off right near the owl.

This all happened in the end of January. About two months later we found out what kind of owl it was. It was a snowy owl.

# The Legend of Thanatopsis

by Robert L. Strickland

*So live, that when thy summons comes to  
join  
The innumerable caravan, which moves  
To that mysterious realm, where each shall  
take  
His chamber in the silent halls of death,  
Thou go not, like the quarry-slave at  
night,  
Scourged to his dungeon, but sustained  
and soothed  
By an unfaltering trust, approach thy grave  
Like one who wraps the drapery of his  
couch  
About him, and lies down to pleasant  
dreams-*

from *Thanatopsis* by  
William Cullen Bryant

A most interesting legend of the Knightville area of Huntington had to do with the famous poet William Cullen Bryant. We know that he lived for a good period of his life in our neighboring town of Cummington and we also know that he very frequently visited Huntington. During the early 1800's Huntington was a bustling and busy area and the Knightville section was well populated with farms and homes. Historical accounts tell us that Bryant's famous poem "Thanatopsis" was written in Cummington when the poet was 18 years old. The legend we refer to here tells us that during the course of a journey from his home to Huntington, the young man stopped to rest along the way. He chose a spot on a knoll on the bank of the Westfield River at the site of the old Pitcher Bridge River Crossing in Knightville. Just adjacent to his resting spot was a small old country cemetery that contained headstones dating back to early

settlement days and which existed on the spot until recent re-location due to construction of the Knightville Dam. The legend tells us that the words and the thoughts contained in his poem, a classic interpretation of death, were inspired by the combination of the old country graveyard and the natural beauty of the rippling stream with its serene valley and rim of encircling hills.

The story behind this legend, for such it must be termed, is most interesting. To me it was always fact rather than legend, for I learned it during my high school years in American Lit class and have remembered and believed it for all the many ensuing years. In addition to believing it myself I have spread it around to a great many people, chief among these were my son and daughter as they were growing up. When it came their turn to study American Lit in high school and then in college, it was always mentioned to

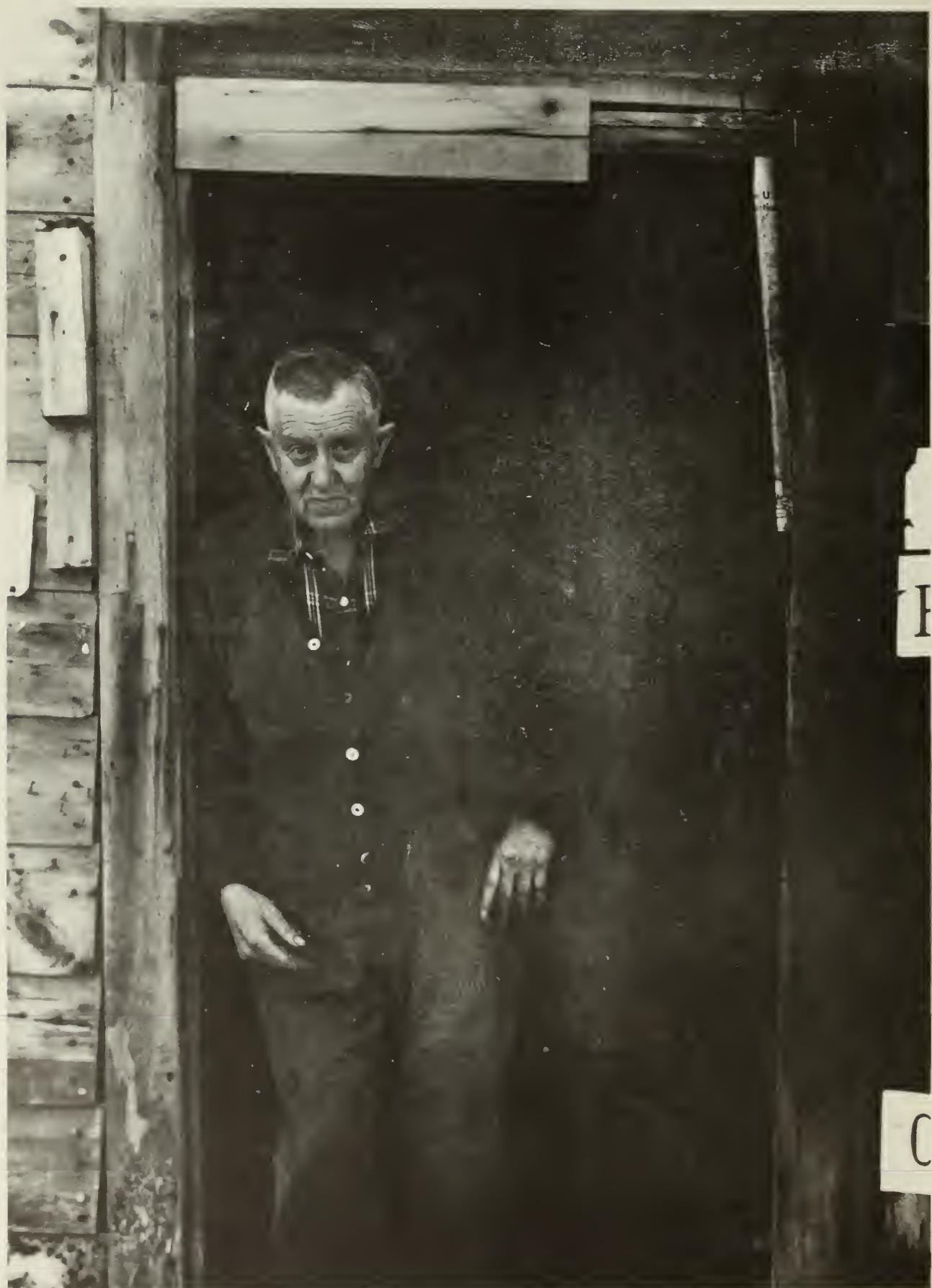
their classmates and teachers that they knew something unique, and special, relative to the composition of "Thanatopsis". I recall that during my son's college years he came to realize that perhaps everything he had been told by his old Dad was not necessarily fact unless it could be documented elsewhere and he asked where he could find proof of it in writing. At the time I dismissed the import of it by telling him that of course it was fact because I learned it from my high school American Lit teacher who was the final authority insofar as I was concerned. During a recent visit with my family the matter of the story of "Thanatopsis" again came up and I decided both for my own information as well as for the sake of upholding my personal reputation for disseminating fatherly, and by now grandfatherly, gems of wisdom, I would find out about it. I reasoned that it would be a simple matter to go straight to the source for confirmation. There was a bit of a problem in contacting a teacher of over forty years ago, but I finally popped the question to my former teacher, Mrs. Jeanette Rooney Pero, who I found living in retirement in Florida with her husband Ernie. I received a newsy letter with proud grandmotherly emphasis from Mrs. Pero in which she answered my question by

saying that she remembered well the story of "Thanatopsis" but that it had been passed to her by word of mouth and was not recorded fact. She stated that the story came to her at an early point in her teaching career in Huntington from a conversation with Charlie Hamblin, Huntington's first citizen for many years and a man still remembered by many present day residents.

And so at last I learned that my story of the history of "Thanatopsis" was indeed a legend. Because our area has such a rich heritage and history of contributing many important people and events to the founding, developing, and preserving of our nation in its Bicentennial year, it is not really important if the story is fact or legend. When one thinks of the degree of inspiration and reason that it took to describe death and its meaning in the manner that the mind of this gifted eighteen year old man rationalizes it, I still prefer to believe that the inspiration came in the way and manner recounted in the legend. Many of us have been helped to find rational explanations to perplexing matters through quiet meditation in the beauty of the hills and valleys of the Westfield River Valley. It is for this reason that I like to believe that in this case the legend must be founded in fact.

\* \* \*





# Guy Thrasher

by Damaris Fernandez - Sierra

Photos by Illydd Fernandez-Sierra

I cannot remember when I first had the wit to stop at Guy Thrasher's but from that day on South Worthington became Guy Thrasher's in my mind. His place is not very much to look at, a roadside vegetable stand with its companion sugar house, the latter largely supported by three living saplings, but don't let that fool you because a visit to Guy's is far more rewarding than one to any fancy emporium. It is not only because you get good value for your money, which you certainly do, but because you stay awhile and visit with Guy. What are you buying? Tomato plants? He'll tell you how and when to set them out. But maybe you are coming up the road at the other end of the year and decide to stop in for apples, then you never know how the conversation will fall out. The last time I did this I had my brother with me, the one who is crazy about water wheels, so with half a peck of apples and a question about the mills that used to operate in South Worthington we were given a half hour talk about the village's industrial past.

At one time there were three mills operating along the river there, two basket factories and one penholder shop, not forgetting Higgins mill above the bridge which would grind your grain for you. For a while there Guy could not remember what one of them made, so he called out to a friend who had stopped by and made himself comfortable by Guy's stove, to see if he could recall what was made at the third mill. "Well," said the friend, "It was a saw-mill, wasn't it?"

"Tut," said Guy, and I for one have never heard him say anything stronger, however irritated he is with us flatlander



*Guy's Sugar House*

tourists, "Of course it was a saw-mill. They were all saw mills first, but then what did they make?" Baskets it seems, they made baskets.

Then he went on to say how, before they went out of business, the penholder shop, Bradley's, had water powered electricity which enabled them to work longs hours when the dark winter days drew in. At that time a cousin of the Thrashers offered to install a turbine in the river there, below the falls, that would have supplied the needs of all South Worthington but unfortunately no one took him up on his offer, and by 1916 the last mill had closed down and another era had ended.

Guy is the baby of his family, born in 1900, last and seventh child of George M. Thrasher himself born in 1850, and his wife Hattie Lyman. The Thrashers not only farmed their own land, raised a large and interesting family and maintained the South Worthington Post Office, but Mrs. Thrasher found the time to work some of the time at Bradley's. The older boys were Arthur Dean, known as A. Dean and

Herbert and two girls, Libbeon, named for two good friends Libby and Simeon, and Ora.

South Worthington according to the Reverend Moody sounded like some kind of spiritual desert in 1899 but to hear about it now as remembered by Libbeon, now Mrs. Homer Damon of Northampton, it sounds as if it had been a pretty lively kind of place. To keep their minds turning over, the turn of the century residents had their Lyceum, a debating society that met at the Conwell Academy. For about ten years the Conwell Academy offered high school courses for the area young people, but unfortunately there were not enough of them to support it. On the lighter side there were always kitchen dances, so called because they were generally held in the kitchen as the largest room in the house, especially if you moved the stove out, and to the music provided by a violin and organ everyone able would dance jigs and reels until exhaustion set in, the food ran out and after all there would be another one the following week, or something just as entertaining.



*Family of George Thrasher in front of their house.*

Not only had people plenty of energy those days, the sturdy farm horses could also work all day and then provide the

power for sleigh rides for the young and not so young. Or maybe they would be hitched up to take the family to a church social. A church social was a way of raising funds, not only to have fun and get together like a kitchen dance. You had to pay all of 25 cents to attend, or 10 cents if you contributed a covered dish. Cash money was a good deal harder to come by then than now, but a quarter went a good deal further, and it seems to me provided a lot more pleasure in the spending thereof. The mills provided but a limited number of jobs and for many the only cash to be raised was in trapping, with a license then as now during late Fall and Winter, and sugaring come Spring. Now the land will only support a limited number of trappers and an area only so many sugar houses, so the older Thrasher boys looked around, thought it out and took off. They set out with a friend when they were eighteen or nineteen years of age to make their fortunes in Florida. They had the usual hard times and for a while only the friend was able to find work, but eventually Herbert got a job with a photographer which led to his and A. Dean's life long occupation. Eventually they were well enough off that they were able to spend the winters in St. Augustine and come back to the old homestead in the summertime. They fixed up a dark room in the barn and kept right on going.

Guy still treasures sample of their work, some of which are most interesting to the local historian, like the view of the road as it ran through the Gap before the 1938 hurricane changed the course of the road. In those days the road didn't just blast straight down to Huntington so that a fast car barely notices Ringville and South Worthington. No it came down by what is now Bob Lucey's place on the far side of the river, through the Gap, in front of the now Drummer's Club, across the bridge and up Thrasher's Hill to join Goss Hill

Road and along down to Huntington, so unless you absolutely had to leave town, catch a train to Springfield or New York City or some place it was probably a better idea to stay put - except for Russell H. Conwell, of course, South Worthington's most famous son, who came back nearly every summer and added considerably to the bustle and social activity of the whole area, because staying put was hardly his way of life.

But for Guy Thrasher life was a different matter. He has proved to all men what fools they are with their fusses and fancies about worldly goods. He has a roof over his head and a good warm stove in winter. Although generally very busy he always has time for a helpful word, to pass the

time of day. He still traps and sugars, he raises all kinds of plants, but only the ones that will do well up here, mind you. Not for him the house in the woods for a brief two years. Except for his time in the army during the Second World War, Guy has lived all his life in South Worthington. All the young people who work for him learn a way of life and how to sustain it that they would never even hear about at school. Carol Myrick is his lucky Girl Friday of the moment and happy to remain so.

Unknown maybe, and unsung outside this rural Township of Worthington, Guy is a man I am proud to know, a truly gentle man.



*Guy Thrasher's Place*



*Florys Smith*

*Photo by Frank L. Truehart*

# Huntington's Lady Potter

*by Betty Jean Aitken*

Florys Smith, area artist, has never had a lesson in her life, but creates delightful pottery.

She had always been fascinated by people working with clay at fairs and eleven years ago decided it was about time she tried it for herself. She asked her husband to build a potter's wheel, ordered her clay and sat down to read the few books she had collected on the subject.

From parts of an old washing machine he found at the town dump, Smith made his wife's first wheel. It wasn't until a few years later while watching another potter at work they realized her wheel actually revolved backwards.

After her husband bought her a new wheel, Florys said, "You can't teach an old dog new tricks, so I had him change it around to go backwards." But backwards or not, her work catches many an eye.

Florys is a quiet little woman and still wonders why people fuss so over her pottery. She still considers her work "experimental." She is still trying different clays and colors, but perhaps this is the very secret of her original work. Know it or not, she has captured the look of 'old pottery' in many of her pieces. Some of her dishes and jars for hanging plants are made from area clay she has dug out of Chester Hill and processed. This is a time consuming job as the clay must be washed through fine mesh time and time again to remove sand particles. But because of rising costs in material she just may go back to digging more she said.

She has learned a lot by trial and error

and admits she is still learning and is just as fascinated as ever with her hobby.

Many jugs are decorated with her drawings. On one little brown jug she has painted black eyed susans and a sandpiper graces a tan pitcher. On one grey crock eight inches tall she has painted a prancing horse and a tree in a pretty blue color. Other pieces are decorated with sprays of wheat or a single flower and stem.

She now owns a fat book that pictures hundreds of antique pottery pieces and she is anxious to try to reproduce a few of these shapes on her wheel.

She fires her pottery in an electric kiln in her cellar and in the winter she brings her wheel into her kitchen. In the summer she moves out to a small building in her yard. Her little workshop is heated by a small cast iron stove which adds charm to her shop's atmosphere.

For the past four years she has exhibited and sold her work at the Norwich Hill Art Show and has demonstrated her skill at the potters wheel at the Gateway Regional School Art and Craft Days.

Although she has made a few pieces to order she would rather not work this way. She just wants to keep her wheel spinning and is willing to sell what she makes on her own. With the bicentennial year at hand she said she may make a few commemorative plates for the town's Country Fair.

This shy little lady, with her backward spinning potter's wheel has spun herself a name in the world of pottery, whether she know it or not.



## PROLOGUE

*Between the chilling embrace of wintertide  
and the warm kiss of spring,  
There is the season of reveille  
the thawing out of Mother Earth.  
This is that time.  
Whether real or imaginary  
It is there for those who seek it.*



### EARLY SPRING

*Through the moonlight mist  
Spring comes to touch every uncounted and nameless thing  
All of nature's creatures and every human heart.  
Even now in early March  
the blush of spring is on every twig and branch.  
The reddish glow of new life is evident everywhere:  
Fat buds ready to burst into leaf,  
new pussy willows purr beneath the vernal sun,  
The snow melts and retreats  
to make a last stand in the shade of a pine and hemlock thicket,  
A losing battle at best  
For already from the sweet dampness of earth  
Winter aconite appears like little puddles of sunshine.  
Above, the blue-black sky of March  
holds a potpourri of weather.  
Much to the bewilderment of the inadequate human Gods  
who try to predict it.  
For fickle spring may in one minute  
wear a veil of silver rain,  
a gown of blue sky, spangled with sun.  
And before that minute has passed  
be dressed in snowflake lace.*

*Spring is more than the season of nature's awakening,  
it stirs man as well.  
For without man's telling of the gifts of life, love,  
the beauty and wonder of it all,  
it would pass as silently as the falling of  
a petal from the apple blossom.*

*by Zenon D'Astous*



*The Huckleberry Trolley*

*Drawing by Natalie Birrell*

# The Huckleberry Trolley

*by Louise Mason*

Not many people remember there was once a trolley that ran from Huntington to Lee. It was in the planning and construction stage for years and cost a fabulous amount of money; but after operating just two seasons, it gave up the ghost, a failure and a three million dollar blunder. The transportation was badly needed by the people of the hill towns for themselves, and for the products they raised and manufactured as well as what they needed to be shipped in. It was hoped that the line would revive local soapstone, hearth-stone, and granite quarries and carry timber out to market.

The line was intended to connect at Lee with the Pittsfield-Great Barrington line, and at the other end with the Western Mass. Street Railway which ran between Huntington and Westfield. As early as 1907 engineering surveys of two possible routes were made, either from Lee to Huntington via Algerie or Lee to Woronoco via Blandford and Otis. Years of wrangling followed which involved the State Legislature, the New Haven Railroad, lobbying by special groups, and residents of hill towns all naturally anxious to have the trolley run through *their* town. There seems to have been a "tug-of-war" over the two proposed routes - each side touting the pros and cons of each with numbers of population served, potential passengers, amount of "grade", distance and times involved, ease of construction, amount of freight, and scenic beauty. Hearings were held in the towns and in Boston with argument, shouting, and many letters sent back and forth.

Blandford wanted the line very much, and its residents organized to push its case. Enos Boise seems to have been the

leader there, predicting that Springfield people would come in even greater numbers to Blandford in summer if the trolley came in even greater numbers to Blandford in summer if the trolley came through the village from Woronoco.

Construction started from Lee even before the final decision was made on the choice of route to the east, and camps for Italian and Polish workers were built along the line. At one point construction was started toward Blandford, then abandoned. Work was concentrated on the so-called Chester route, though the line never entered Chester at all. The legal deadline for completion was August 1912, and since time was short it seemed necessary to strike straight through the brush down the mountain to Huntington for a temporary route, and hope to lay a more correct line on a better grade later on. Construction was slow, and by late October contractors were still poking through the bushes hunting a practical route, though clearly the line down into Huntington would have sharp curves and steep grades. Gangs were cutting away the forest to prepare for the big steam shovels.

By 1913 the line was completed as far as the Otis-Blandford line, then a long cut in North Blandford gave months of trouble and men worked in shifts twenty-four hours a day. Locomotive whistles were heard tooting all night. The village of North Blandford had been by-passed because of proximity to the new Springfield water supply. In fact much of the town had been evicted. In the meantime the construction company was using the empty houses and stores for its work camp, and work went on around the clock.

It is said the condemned village was lit by five thousand acetylene lamps. The deadline was again extended as construction bogged down due to muddy back country roads. While filling a small pond and swamp between North Blandford and Algerie, thirty thousand cubic yards of fill were dumped and sank out of sight. The crew gave up and shifted the line away from the edge to firmer ground.

The line was finally finished in November, 1913, and was expected to be ready for use the following spring. In the meantime the New Haven Railroad, who owned the right of way and had sponsored construction, was involved in serious anti-trust suits. The government declared that all trolley lines then under New Haven Railroad control must be independently owned.

By August 1914 the line was still not operating, as the previous winter had caused washouts and slides in the fresh embankments, even undermining and burying the rails in spots. The rails did not actually join the Westfield Street Railroad according to one report; it would be necessary to transfer passengers and freight in Huntington. But Dick Carmel remembers that eventually there was a way of switching cars from the Westfield-Huntington line onto the Lee bound track at Huntington.

Finally in August 1915, a car left Pittsfield bound for Huntington. For some time previous to this, cars had been running from Pittsfield to East Lee. On this trip three pails of huckleberries were the first freight carried as three young folk returning from a berrying trip were invited aboard to ride down to Huntington where they lived. Huntington was ecstatic and a large crowd awaited this first car's arrival with tooting whistles and ringing bells. A group of hill-town men made the return trip over the mountain. The Huntington delegation was headed by Leonard Hardy,

a prominent resident and a supporter of the project. The grade up out of Huntington onto Cook Mountain was mighty steep, a seven percent grade. Francis Knightly of Huntington, who had worked as water boy for a crew building the older Westfield-Huntington line, said he never rode the "Huckleberry Line" - he was too scared. It was three miles uphill to the top of the grade before it began to level out. At Huntington the track ended in a lot beside St. Regis store (now Dupelles), coming in diagonally within ten feet of the Westfield line. The town hay scales formerly occupied the site (now the Huntington Package store and area). Apparently there were no side tracks in Huntington except for the four "catch-tracks" for runaways, spaced every three-fourths of a mile on the grade up the mountain. A portable substation was set at the top of the hill out of Huntington, and the cars went right up with no trouble. Coming down was not so simple. The first car over the line was promptly condemned by the state safety inspector who insisted that an extra air compressor and tank be installed for safety on the grade. The run "down mountain", stopping to open and close each of the four safety switches on the steep grade was difficult. Once an inexperienced man took a run over the line in a snow storm, and being hesitant to attempt the trip down to Huntington, wisely chickened out, backed into the Blandford siding and telephoned excuses to the dispatcher in Pittsfield.

The Lee "Gleaner" wrote that the line was first class to Blandford but from there to Huntington a very ordinary and crooked trolley route. It did mention the tons of huckleberries along the way awaiting pickers and markets. Perhaps this publicity initiated the name "Huckleberry Railroad".

Even the two seasons the trolley did run, passenger travel was light. On good days

maybe a dozen fares; Sunday excursions 20-25; all very disappointing. It was considered a fine Sunday outing to ride the trolley to Lee and perhaps on to Pittsfield, returning to Huntington in the evening. Otherwise most of the passengers were hunters and fishermen. Were the reasons for the limited use high fares, poor scheduling, lack of publicity, actual lack of potential passengers? Certainly none of the runs made good connections for Westfield. It was felt that the choice of route doomed the project from the beginning; that a route closer to existing villages of Otis, East Otis, Blandford, and down to Woronoco would have been more practical and successful from every standpoint.

The line did carry lots of draftees to the government induction center in Lee. Mr. Eddie Hayden of Huntington remembered riding up for his exam - the beautiful ride through the countryside, and the handsome trolley cars, dark oak colored, open in summer and closed in cold weather. He also remembered one hair-raising trip when some boys playing on a flatcar, using a pole poked through a hole in the floor to bear on a wheel as a brake, lost the pole and came down "like hell" smashing into a building. No serious injuries! Alice Britton tells about her father, George Pierce, barely escaping death while riding the Huckleberry Line up to Lee for his induction exam. He and a friend were standing on the rear platform, and during a violent thunderstorm a bolt of lightning hit the car and split the handrail right in front of them.

The line by-passed villages in this thinly populated area, but some grain, produce, fertilizer, and coal were shipped in. Stone, lumber, and cordwood were carried out. Farm wives could write an order to Lee and the obliging grocery store put the box on the returning trolley for delivery.

Service was suspended in the fall of 1917 due to shortage of men during World

War I. Service resumed from April to October 1918, and stopped again. The excuse was that the flu epidemic and unsettled labor conditions and the strike on the Berkshire Street Railway limited both passengers and workers. To make matters worse the line had operated at a deficit and the New Haven Railroad, still the actual owner, was no longer willing to invest more money. Autos competed even with more prosperous trolley lines, and labor and material costs were skyrocketing. All the railroads were in a financial mess after the war, and the Huckleberry Line was only one of many that were discontinued and then scrapped. Granite contracts kept the line operating from Lee to the Newall Quarry until 1925, but by 1929 rails were being taken up and used elsewhere.

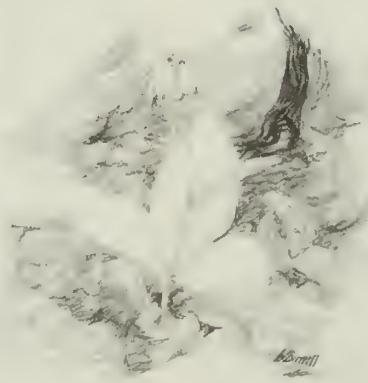
After the Berskhire Street Railway went into bankruptcy, Western Mass. Electric Company acquired the right of way for a possible cross-Berkshire power line which was finally built during the 1950s. Today the trolley line can be easily followed along the power line in many places, and would provide fine hiking in good weather. The old trolley route is marked clearly on area U.S. Geological Survey maps. From Huntington it climbs steeply and more or less joins the Huntington-Blandford Road above Cochran Pond, then veers off to cross North Street in Blandford close to the Turnpike crossing nearly two miles from Blandford Village. It parallels Gore Road and then North Blandford Road, veering off north to by-pass the town of North Blandford near Beaver Pond. Again running close to the existing road, it crosses Algerie Road, then runs close to Creek Pond and White Lilly Pond in Otis State Forest. It continues, winding its way between swamps and bogs, passing near several quarries shown on the map, into a corner of Becket, and crosses the Massachusetts Turnpike near Ward Pond. From

there into Lee the Massachusetts Turnpike now follows the old route along the side of Greenwater Pond.

If you are interested in knowing the story

of the "Huckleberry Line" in more detail see *Chronicle on the Huckleberry* written by Leonard H. Spencer in 1967, and now available in local libraries.

\* \* \*



## I Remember, Too

*by Ruth Steins*

I really enjoyed the "I Remember" articles in the first issue of "STONE WALLS". At my age, sometimes remembering is all I can do, and sometimes not even that!

After I was married and lived on the Huntington end of the Village, I used to take my baby and go down to our old home on Westfield Road and spend the day with my mother. How I wish I could now, but the old house was demolished

ten years ago to widen the road. We were often alone and she used to tell me about things that happened years ago. One of them is a story I want to tell about an old couple who lived in the little white house on the corner of Old Westfield Road and Route 20. We called them Grandpa and Gramma Bemis.

Grandpa Bemis was a Civil war Veteran and blind. Gramma was a small woman who always wore a black shawl around her shoulders. She had the most beautiful house plants in all of her windows and needed no fancy curtains to beautify her home for there was always a blooming plant in one of her windows to do it for her.

On my way home from school, I used to stop and visit. Sometimes she would give me a cookie. Mother did not like me to take food from her, and I often wondered why. Now I know. About all they had to live on was Grandpa's pension and what few vegetables and fruit they could grow. They had a son who lived with them, but did not give them much help.

My mother used to go up and help Gramma do her housework and take care of Grandpa, for she was that type. No matter how much work she had to do, she could always find time to help out a neighbor.

Grandpa had some kind of a film over his eyes which had made him blind. One day when she was up there he said to her, "Mrs. Cowles, I been lying here wondering if you would do something for me." Thinking that he wanted her to make something special for him, Mother said, "Why, yes, Grandpa, if I can."

"Well," he said, "I been lying here thinking, and I believe that if you put a tiny bit of snuff in the corner of each one of my eyes, it would eat off that film and I would be able to see again."

Surprised, my mother replied, "Why Grandpa, I cannot do that. It will hurt you terribly. The pain will be terrific."

He replied, "I know that, but I have laid in darkness for a long time, and I have just one wish before I die. If I can be granted the wish to see again, I can stand anything."

Mother thought a moment and then said, "Well, if you can get permission from Gramma and from your two boys, I will do it for you."

The next week when she went up, she had their permission, and started up the treatment. Once a week for three or four weeks my mother put the snuff in his eyes. Then she made up her mind to tell him that she could not bear to see him suffer any more, so she would have to stop the treatments.

That morning was a warm sunny one and when she went in she said, "Good morning, Grandpa and Gramma. It's a beautiful morning, the sun is shining bright and warm. How would you like to get up and sit in a chair while I change the bed?" They both lay in bed most of the time.

"Yes," Grandpa said. "It is a most beautiful morning, but we are going to lay right here." Then he said, "Mrs. Cowles, come here." She went to the side of the bed. He took hold of her hand, and said, "Mrs. Cowles, you have on an apron of white cloth. It has a dark stripe in it, but I can't tell the color. Early this morning when the sun came up, it shone in the windows and my wish was granted, for it shone on the bed and I saw my dear wife's face for the first time in many years. I am so thankful, and you do not have to put anything in my eyes anymore. We are going to lay here together till the end comes."

I don't remember when they passed away, but I still have fond memories of the little house on the corner.

\* \* \*



*"The charming Nannie Holland soon  
attracted the attention of the young  
soldier."*

# The American Revolution in Murrayfield

*by Grace Oppenheimer*

The two hundredth anniversary of our nation has awakened the curiosity of many people as to what part their ancestors or towns played in that early history.

Murrayfield, embracing the present townships of Chester, Huntington, and a portion of Middlefield and of Worthington, was not left out in the molding of our nation. A struggle with the Mother Country was in progress. Captain David Shepard, Deacon Jesse Johnson, Lieutenant Malcolm Henry, Deacon Samuel Matthews, and Lieutenant James Clark were chosen to act on behalf of the town as a Committee of Correspondence at a town meeting held July 25, 1774. It was unanimously voted not to purchase, buy, or consume any goods or wares imported from Great Britain until the meeting of the General Congress at Philadelphia. Men who had served in the King's army turned to helping train men to defend our country. Such a man was William Toogood, a captain, who drilled men on the area set aside for a training field in Chester Center, near the church. Captain Toogood served his new country well and was highly respected by all.

Town records show that at a meeting held May 3, 1775 blankets and clothing for our men at Cambridge were voted to be purchased and delivered to same. Many of our men had immediately enlisted in the defense of their new country. There was no drafting; enlistment was completely

voluntary. Captain David Shepard responded to the Lexington Alarm April 19, 1775. He was captain of a company of Minutemen in Colonel Seth Pomeroy's regiment and was appointed Surgeon April 28, 1775. He was a surgeon of a detachment from the 3rd Hampshire County Regiment which marched to Ticonderoga October 21, 1776 to reinforce the army by order of General Schuyler. David Shepard was Murrayfield's first doctor, coming to this town around 1770.

A son of James Quigley at the battle of Long Island, August, 1776, became separated from his company. Dodging the British troops, he reached the East River. He lashed three muskets, which he had picked up on the battlefield, on his back and swam the river, a feat which required great endurance and strength. He rejoined Washington's forces and was present at the battle of White Plains the following October. He served throughout the war and was present as a member of Washington's forces at the surrender of Cornwallis at Yorktown, Pennsylvania in October, 1781.

On June 17, 1776 the town was asked to sign an oath or agreement: "Who are friends of Liberty and their Country, and able to see if the town, as a body, is willing to have the thirteen United Colonies declared an Independent State from Great Britain." At a full meeting every man was in accord. The people were poor but

extremely patriotic. The town paid and clothed its soldiers in the Continental Army, besides caring for their families. They raised beef and grain to fill army regulations.

North Chester highway was the route used often in transporting ammunition and artillery. It is recorded that even General George Washington traversed this route on his way to Boston. After the surrender of Burgoyne, a portion of the captured army was marched to the vicinity of Boston, there to be stationed until exchanged. On the way, some of the prisoners were lodged in the Chester Center meeting house. Among them was a young Scotchman named David Cross. In the evening the people of the town visited the prisoners in large numbers, bringing food. The regimental band played their finest and most melodious airs and the time was passed in various amusements. The charming Nannie Holland soon attracted the particular attention of the young soldier. He had been acquainted with her father at Saratoga. Mr. Holland had been detailed there to guard some prisoners, of whom David was one. On resuming the journey, he was peculiarly unhappy, and his thought lingered on Nannie Holland of Chester Hill. After reaching Worcester, he resolved that, at the first opportunity, he would bid farewell to the service of King George and return to the neighborhood of the girl who had so strongly bewitched him. A friend to whom he communicated the intention, proposed to accompany him. They escaped from the lines in the darkness of night, and after traveling for a few miles, had hardly time to secrete themselves in a hay mow before their pursuers were upon them. Concealed deeply in the hay, next

to the boarding of the barn, they eluded discovery. Great were their sufferings from hunger as they wandered through Worcester and Hampshire county towards the mountains. At last they arrived at the place of safety provided for them. Diligent in business, of a blameless life and spotless character, David's constant perseverance was finally rewarded by receiving Nannie Holland as his bride. They settled in Washington, and in the enjoyment of competence, lived long and happily together.

Just over the Chester line in Middlefield is the Bell Cemetery where lie the remains of Elijah Churchill, bodyguard of General George Washington. A man of valor, he was presented with the Purple Heart, one of three such awards given during the Revolution. This was the highest reward at that time. In more recent years it has lost its importance and is given under other conditions. Nothing spectacular marks the grave of Sergeant Churchill, just a simple grave marker with inscription: "*Patriot of the Revolution*" and a flag stuck into the earth.

In our local cemeteries you will find markers of many Revolutionary War soldiers, many who went from Chester and many who later moved to this town.

Murrayfield had over ninety men who served in the Continental Army, of which about 8 served as officers. Yes, we had a part in the formation of this great country of ours, Chester, Middlefield, Huntington, and Worthington can well be proud of their heritage.

Information taken from Chester Town Records, writing of Samuel Quigley, private records, and Copeland's *History of Murrayfield*.

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# The Blandford Pines

by Henry H. Lloyd, July, 1858

from *Blandford Poems*  
compiled by Dr. Howard A. Gibbs for the  
Blandford Bicentennial Anniversary  
July 6 and 7, 1935

Five hundred years ago or more  
These stately pines upsprung,  
Beneath the giant parent arms  
That o'er the mountains hung.

And here they grew where panther screams  
Outrang the wolf's wild howl,  
And Indian war-whoops echoed shrill,  
With bruin's sullen growl.

When centuries' growths had shot them up,  
As once their fathers stood,  
Beneath decayed their ancestors—  
They, monarchs of the wood.

Then from the East some bold men came,  
To lay the forest low;  
And many a mighty monarch groaned.—  
They were the forest's foe.

And far and wide the slaughter spread;  
The axe, with havoc dire,  
Smote legions down: the sacrifice  
Was finished with the fire.

But these they spared. Perchance some sage,  
By glassy spring to dine,  
Had seen his own bald head, and saved  
These mountain locks of pine.

Some dame perhaps, who heard the blast,  
Come searching to her door,  
Had prayed the shelter God had made  
Might waste away no more.

And here they stand, as they have stood,  
Old Blandford's beacon light,  
To beckon back her children strayed,  
To early memories bright.

Five christian generations prayed  
Near where their verdure waves,  
And four are sleeping either side;  
And still they guard their graves.

Some churchyards yield the solemn yew;  
In some the willows weep;  
But Blandford's dead have these tall pines  
To direful vigils keep.

But, year by year, and one by one,  
Their number dwindle fast;  
Like Indian tribes they knew of yore,  
Their die of death is cast.

Long may they live! May Blandford's sons,  
Ere time shall wreck them down,  
Plant other pines to fill their place,  
These worthies of the town.



# Lumbering in the Hill Towns Today

*by Geoff Lynes*

"I just can't keep ahead of the trees." So spoke Franny Wells, fifth generation 'Cummingtonite', farmer, school bus driver, and friend to all. We were talking about the land and what had happened to it.

Franny went on to say that about two hundred years ago the settlers arrived and did a lot of land clearing. They were cramped by the forest and needed room for growing their food and feed for their livestock, lumber for houses, barns, and sheds, and logs for firewood. Nothing was wasted. Even the stumps were used to make fences to contain cattle.

He continued, "Geoff, your property used to be all pasture except for a few scrub apple trees, some blueberries, and the maples. Look at it now. It's all grown up...all thirty-two acres of it." That means that in his lifetime, sixty-five years, the timber has reclaimed the man-made fields. That has happened three times since the settlers first cleared Cummington.

Today the land is seldom cleared for farming. Now the forests are managed for nation-wide uses of timber, and a forester such as Howard Mason must use great skill to maintain the wood growth in the Hill Towns.

Even though he is a forester not a farmer, Howard respects the timber for its many uses as did the settlers of the early days. He just has to set his sights in a

different way. Where the old-time farmer simply used the woods around him as best he could for his own life way, Howard Mason looks on the timberlands as a natural resource to serve the needs of the whole nation and its economy.

Part of his task is to manage 11,000 acres of timber land that the company he works for owns. He will select a section of that land to be worked, mark the trees to be cut, and then he must supervise the actual cutting of the timber.

Howard also has to find good timber for his company to buy, and that is called timber cruising. It is a vital part of forest management in general and entails finding woodlots for sale and then evaluating them for marketing. Putting a value on a plot of timber is a detailed and painstaking job.

"First," says Howard, "you must look for any old scars or what look like seams in a tree. If there are any scars or seams, the tree may be no good because such marks destroy the trueness of the grain. Old breaks, shown by seams, allow water to enter and rot can start. Also, too many low branches mean a knotty tree which can cause weak boards."

Howard went on to explain other elements in today's lumbering as compared to the older ways. For example, today the private woodlot owner may still sell trees "on the stump" but the state also offers timber for sale. Both the

state and the private owner can set a limit as to the size to be cut, and that is measured in inches of diameter at breast height. Sometimes the limits may be six inches and sometimes twelve. Mostly a higher rather than a lower size limit is agreed upon since it is more efficient to mill the larger log.

Milling operations in the Hill Towns use logs from four to eighteen feet and over. Both hardwood and softwood are sawn. Hardwood is usually cut  $1 \frac{1}{8}$  inches thick at the mill, and then it is planed elsewhere. It is used for table tops, table legs, tool handles, truck siding and floors, and veneer. To be of top grade it must look the same on all sides and edges. Softwood is sawn in several different thicknesses. It is used a lot for trim work and thus only needs to look good on one side. It has structural uses, too, and in those uses needs only to be sound. Both hardwood and softwood are used in pallet making in these hills. Four foot logs are cut and sawn and nailed into platforms to be used for transporting goods easily.

All wood cutting operations create an abundance of sawdust which the settlers

used only in small quantity. Today, lumbering operations save the sawdust, and it is sold for animal bedding, garden mulch, and as the raw material for a replacement for plywood called fibreboard or chipboard. Modern machinery has made it possible to press a mixture of chips, sawdust, and a resinous glue under heat into four foot by eight foot sheets of sturdy wall and door material. Such a plant is soon to be set up in this area because there is getting to be more and more forest growth available.

The forests of these hills have lived many lives. We know little of what happened with them before the settlers began to clear land. We do know, however, that at one time most of these hills were nearly treeless. The land was swept almost clear of trees so that it could be farmed. Then, living conditions changed and the farms became too hard to keep up.

As Franny said, "I just can't keep ahead of the trees." Today, the Howard Masons of the world manage and maintain our forests. The crop has changed from homestead farming to forest 'farming'.

\* \* \*

# The "Country 'Sugar and Spice' Shop"

*by Kevin Damon*

"I wanted to do something bigger and better I guess," explained Edna Underwood. "I've always enjoyed cooking."

Mrs. Underwood owns and runs the "Country 'Sugar & Spice' Shop" on Worthington Road, Huntington. After

working for eighteen years at Moltenbrey's Market, she went into her own business three years ago. As she never advertises, her customers are mostly relatives and friends.

Along with macrame and an herb garden in the rear of her house, Mrs. Underwood considers her shop a hobby. Edna Underwood makes cookies, bread, rolls, and, most important, wedding cakes and decorations. Cakes are her most common order, though in September of 1975, the demand came for homemade cookies for children's lunches.

Edna Underwood bakes mainly for special occasions, and so makes little profit. What profit she does earn goes to purchase more ingredients. Rising food prices don't effect her getting orders, but she did have to raise her prices in accordance with inflation. Mrs. Underwood asks for two weeks notice in advance for her wedding cake orders.

Many times, Mrs. Underwood told me, a child has come in and "sampled a cake" by putting his fingers through it, forcing a minor repair. She told me of another experience she had one day while taking a wedding cake to a relative's wedding. She had a three layer cake in her car; the large layer being in the back and the two top layers in her lap. She warned her husband, who was driving, not to make any sudden stops as the cake would be wrecked. Going over a bridge, her husband saw the big layer sliding forward and braked the car to fix it. The bottom layer slid into the back of the front seat and the other two layers went into the dashboard. Mrs. Underwood had a half hour to repair the cake and get to the wedding.

Edna Underwood thinks someone with more time could make her present hobby into a full time occupation.

\* \* \*

## RECIPES FROM AN OLD COOKBOOK

*contributed by Alice Britton*

### *Dandelion Salad*

$\frac{1}{2}$  cup cream  
2 eggs  
1 tablespoon sugar  
1 teaspoon salt  
4 tablespoons vinegar  
 $\frac{1}{4}$  cup butter  
Paprika  
Black pepper  
4 thick slices of bacon, cubed  
Dandelion greens.

Carefully wash the dandelion as you would lettuce. Roll in a towel and pat dry. Then put in a salad bowl and put in a warm place. Cut bacon in cubes, fry quickly, and drop over the dandelion. Put the butter and cream into the skillet and melt over a slow fire. Beat eggs, add salt, pepper, sugar, and vinegar and mix with slightly warm cream mixture. Pour back into skillet and under increased heat, stir until dressing becomes thick like custard. Pour piping hot over dandelion. Stir thoroughly. Never use dandelion after it has begun to flower, for then it is apt to be bitter.

## *Scapple*

Separate one hog's head into halves. Take out the eyes and brains. Scrape and thoroughly clean the head. Put into a large kettle and cover with 4 or 5 quarts of cold water. Simmer gently for 2 to 3 hours or until the meat falls from the bones. Skim off the grease carefully from the surface; remove meat, chop fine, and return to the liquor. Season with salt and pepper to taste and 1 teaspoon of powdered sage. Sift in granulated corn meal, stirring constantly, until the mixture is thickened to the consistency of soft mush. Cook slowly for one hour, watching carefully, as it scorchs easily. When sufficiently cooked, pour into greased cooking tins and store in a cool place until ready to use. Cut in thin slices and fry in hot fat until crisp and brown.

## *Stuffed Beef Heart*

1 beef heart  
1 cup cracker crumbs  
1/2 cup white sauce  
Salt and pepper  
1 cup roasted chestnuts

Soak the heart in cold water about 1 hour. Wash thoroughly and remove muscles and arteries. Make a filling of the above ingredients and fill the heart. Fasten securely. Cover with boiling water and boil for ten minutes. Reduce heat and simmer until tender. Remove heart from water one half hour before serving and sprinkle with cracker crumbs, salt, and pepper. Bake in a moderate oven until brown.

## ADVICE FROM AN OLD COOKBOOK

*Mrs. Rundell's Domestic Cookery*  
published in 1861  
contributed by Florence Bates

The water in which meat has been boiled makes an excellent soup for the poor, by adding to it vegetables, oatmeal, or peas.

Lumps of charcoal put about birds and meat will preserve them from taint, and restore what is spoiling.

Vegetables should be carefully cleaned from insects and nicely washed. Boil them in plenty of water.

Be cautious to smell every egg before you use it, for a bad one will spoil the whole.

Fresh small beer, or bottled malt liquors, may be used as a substitute for eggs in puddings.

Candles made in cool weather are best.

\* \* \*



Gravesite of Elijah Churchill in Bell Cemetery, Middlefield.

# Sergeant Elijah Churchill

by Ethel M. Pease

In the southeastern part of Middlefield, a dirt road presently called Wright Road leads from the Skyline Trail down what is still known as Churchill Hill, named for the family which resided for more than a hundred years at its foot. Here still stands the old homestead, known in later days as the hunting lodge of the late Herbert Knox Smith of Hartford, and now as the Vreeland summer cottage.



*Churchill Homestead in Middlefield.*

Though no Churchills now live in Middlefield, it is fitting that the name should survive, as the first of the name, in Middlefield, Elijah Churchill, has recently been identified as the first of three Connecticut soldiers to receive the "Order of Military Merit" established by General George Washington in 1782 for extraordinary exploits in the Revolutionary War. This old order was revived by President Hoover in 1932, as the Order of the Purple Heart.

Born in 1755, Elijah Churchill came from a pioneering Connecticut family. When he was 22, he enlisted for three years in the

Continental Army, giving his residence as East Windsor, Connecticut. Two months before, he had married Eleanor Nooney of Enfield, and he probably did not return home until the close of the war, as his first child was not born until 1782.

At that date, his brother-in-law, James Nooney, and others, were buying land in Chester and Middlefield. Nooney bought the mills at the head of Glendale Falls, and Elijah Churchill had settled nearby, by 1793, building the homestead where three generations of the family lived for over one hundred years. He and his sons were carpenters and joiners. No doubt specimens of their furniture still exist in Middlefield homes. Elijah was hampered by lameness because of his Revolutionary War service, and in requesting a pension, stated that he had received support from the town from time to time. About 1820, he moved from Middlefield to live just across the line in Chester, in the original house on the farm once belonging to Miss Amelia Jones. Here he lived the remainder of his life with his son, Charles, leaving his oldest son, Giles, to occupy the Middlefield Homestead.

Elijah Churchill died April 11, 1841 and his widow five years later. In 1869, their home in Chester was unfortunately burned, destroying the prized badge of the Purple Heart and the accompanying letter, signed by General Washington. (The original badge of the Purple Heart was sewed on the left breast of the uniform coat, over the heart; it was of purple sprigged silk edged with silver braid.) Churchill's tombstone in the southeastern corner of the Bell Cemetery on Skyline Trail is a simple marble slab with the

words, "Revolutionary Soldier", but there is nothing to indicate his special services to his state and country.

According to the information given in the book, "The Order of Military Merit, the Badge of Military Merit of the Continental Army" found in the Connecticut State Library, the stories of how these three Connecticut soldiers won the Purple Heart can nowhere be found in detail. Sergeant Elijah Churchill took part in two raids within the British lines, the first in November 1780 and the second in October 1781. Major Benjamin Tallmadge in charge of the Headquarters Secret Service received word that the British had stored several tons of hay for winter forage at Coram, Long Island, on the North Shore, about nine miles southeast of Setauket or Brookhaven, Connecticut. This forage magazine was protected by a nearby stockade, a deep ditch, a high wall, and a strong fortification of felled trees.

In planning his attack on this stronghold, known as Fort Saint George, Major Tallmadge decided to stake everything on a surprise move by a special company of fifty men, of whom Sergeant Churchill was one. To take fifty men across twenty miles of salt water, land them within the enemy lines, march them several miles therein, and to attempt such a strong fortification might seem a reckless and foolhardy venture, but Benjamin Tallmadge as Chief Intelligence Officer, knew his ground and more important knew his troopers. After a violent November gale had delayed the party eight days, the expedition embarked in whale boats and landed on a deserted strip of Long Island shore. Tallmadge could not risk discovery of his boats and men, so he concealed his men in a wood and made the boats as inconspicuous as possible. All day long, not daring to light fires, the men shivered under the forest cover, but when darkness came, the cold and

stiffened troopers started upon a rapid march down the deserted wintry road.

At three A.M. November 23, they were within two miles of Fort Saint George and halted to receive orders for the attack. Tallmadge divided his men into three groups. Sixteen men in charge of Sergeant Churchill were to attack the main and largest blockhouse. At four A.M. the three groups separated to move against the fort from as many different directions. With the swiftness of Indians, they moved like shadows. Churchill and his men were within fifty feet of the fort before a sentinel challenged them. Instantly the black winter morning became alive with flame and uproar. Led by the intrepid sergeant, the little party of sixteen plunged through the ditch, swarmed the stockade and crashed the fort building before the defenders could settle into organized resistance. The other two parties cleared the defense at about the same time. Within ten more minutes, Tallmadge's men had possession of the entire fort. As a result of this attack the following remarkable accomplishments were noted:

1. Destruction of Fort Saint George and a British supply schooner off shore
2. Capture of over fifty British soldiers
3. Burning of over three hundred tons of hay

The British Loyalist Militia, unable to believe that only a small party would risk such an attack, delayed action until their own forces were sufficiently large to assure success against a supposedly large force. In the meantime, Major Tallmadge's men had reached their boats and by eleven P.M. November 23rd, the men and their prisoners had reached Fairfield, Connecticut, having twice crossed Long Island Sound, a total distance of forty miles, marched an equal distance, stormed and taken a fort, and destroyed over three hundred tons of hay, all in less than twenty-four hours. The entire company of

fifty men returned safely with only one man being injured.

In the second story of his earning the Purple Heart, Sergeant Churchill played an important role in the attack on Fort Slongo, about forty-eight miles northeast of Brooklyn. Major Tallmadge had made several excursions within the British lines, making drawings of Fort Slongo with most exact reports of British vessels, their size and strength and number of troops. When the force of about one hundred men made the attack at three A.M. of October 3, 1781, Sergeant Churchill was in the van of the first attacking party and again he acquitted himself with utmost gallantry. The report of this affair shows the surrender of the fort, the capture of twenty-one prisoners, and the destruction of artillery stores and clothing. It was these two completely successful raids upon fortified works within enemy lines on Long Island, that gained for Sergeant Churchill, only twenty-six years old at the time of his second attack, the award of the Purple Heart which was couched in these words:

"Sergeant Churchill, of the Second Regiment of Light Dragoons, in the several enterprises against Fort Saint George and Fort Slongo on Long Island, in their (The Board of Awards) opinion, acted a very conspicuous and singularly and meritorious part; that at the head of each body of attack, he not only acquitted himself with great gallantry, firmness and address, but that the surprise, in one instance and the success of the attack in the other, proceeded in considerable degree from his conduct and management."

#### References:

*A History of the Town of Middlefield*  
by Edward Church and Philip Mack Smith

*The Order of Military Merit, the Badge of Military Merit of the Continental Army.*



Blue and buff uniform, worn by Elijah Churchill as a member of Washington's body guard (1776-1780).

# Old Timers Recall Unusual "HISTORICAL EVENTS"

*by Betty Jean Aitken*

Old timers in this small town often double as local historians, with more than one interesting tale to tell the younger residents.

Many events of the past which have otherwise gone unrecorded are kept alive through the "word of mouth" accounts offered by these colorful citizens.

For instance, how many people know that Huntington was once serviced by a horseback lady mailman?

How many know about the peculiar death ride of a local man down County Road onto what is now Rt. 66?

Or who knows who owned the first Model T Ford on Norwich Hill?

## THE DEATH RIDE

Bean Hill Road was once known as Fairman Hill. The Fairman family lived in the house that is now owned by the Delanos. Mr. Fairman often drove his team of horses up the road, past the old Norwich

Hill Congregational Church and down County Road that now leads out to Route 66.

One winter's morning around the year 1915 he was making such a trip to visit the Conners Place just over the Huntington line into Westhampton. As he passed the little graveyard and the Merritt farm that day his ride somehow seemed strange to the people he passed.

Mr. Fairman normally waved to the farmers and to children as he drove along, but on this morning he sat bolt upright looking straight ahead with the reins held tight in his lap.

It wasn't until later in the day that people learned old Fairman was dead, and had been that morning when they noted his "strange ride."

The horses knew their way and taken him straight to the Conners farmyard. Upon his arrival it was thought strange that he didn't go straight into the house as was his habit.

Going to the wagon they found him dead. They wrapped his body in a blanket, laid it in the back of the wagon, and the Conners drove the faithful team of horses home with their master's body.

In later years the Bean family purchased the old Sam Lyman house where the William Laflammes later lived and thus the road became known as Bean Hill Road.

There are still a few in town and around these parts that refer to it as Fairman Hill, however.



*Drawing by Kristin Jay*

## THE LADY MAILMAN

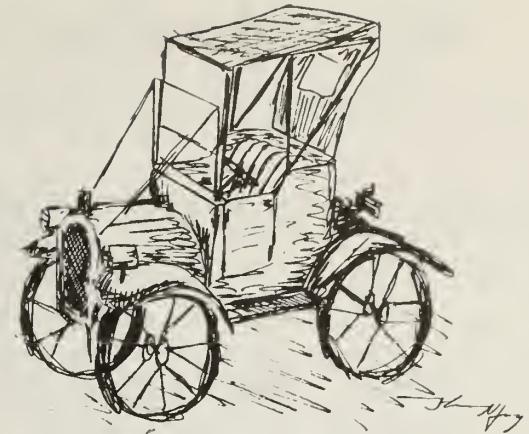
Huntington's Norwich Hill once had its mail delivered by a horseback rider named Ruth Phillips. That was back around 1915 in the days before there were too many cars.

The roads were not in the best of condition, especially in the springtime and winter, and plowing with horses was a tedious task.

There are still some who can remember Ruth galloping across the pastures carrying the mail in a grain sack slung over the saddle.

Snowstorms didn't stop her run and she took short cuts through the woods and skirted drifts to arrive at the farmhouses pretty much on schedule.

She wore man's overalls, and a huge warm jacket, hat, scarf, and mittens to keep herself warm against the icy winds. Some say she looked like a big teddy bear atop her horse.



*Drawing by Thomas Jay*

## THE FIRST MODEL T

The first car on Norwich Hill, a Model T Ford, was owned by a Mr. Weatherwax who lived in the house on County Road now owned by David Siegler. This was in 1915 or 1916.

The second proud owner of a Model T was Fredrick Merritt, Sr. who also lived on County Road in the house where Abner Thibault lived a few years ago.

Times were hard during the war years (First World War) but after the war was over and more families replaced their horse and buggies with Model T's.



*Drawing by Kristin Jay*

# My Mother's Molasses Jug

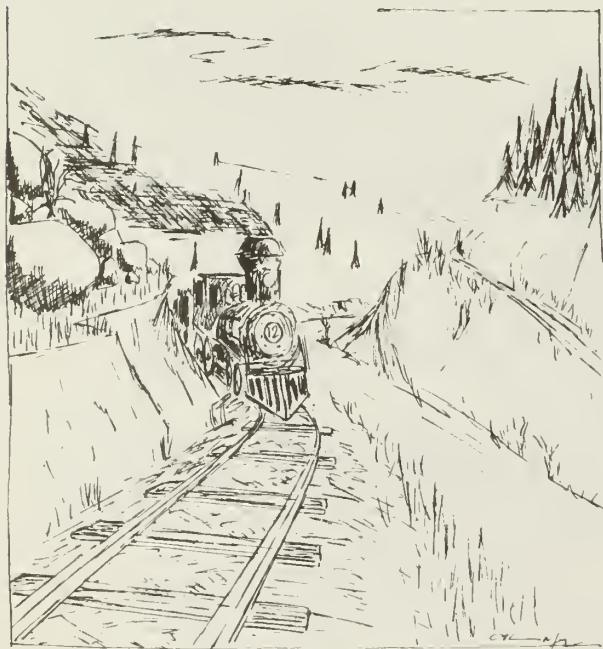
by Ruth S. Steins

We all know the song about "Little Brown Jug, how I love thee" and have sung it and danced to its lively tune many times. I know I have. No one tells, if I remember correctly, what that little brown jug held, but we always assumed that it held good old corn liquor or moonshine.

Let me tell you about the brown jug I remember and I will call it *The Sweet Old Jug* or *My Mother's Molasses Jug*. It was also brown and it held a gallon.

The time of this story is the latter part of the eighteen-hundreds, I would say about 1895 and a few years before I was born. The jug was very much in evidence, however, until a short time ago.

My folks then lived in the old house located where the home of "Jeep Janik" now stands. It was known as the Old Gate House. At that time the land across the river was open farm land and the railroad tracks were plainly visible.



Drawing by Thomas Jay

In those days the grocer used to send to Boston for orders of special groceries for his patrons. They would be sent up by train, and when they came the customers collected them and paid for them.

My mother's molasses jug made many trips to Boston to be filled with a special brand of molasses she liked to use in her baking. What delicious gingerbread and cookies she used to make! They needed no extras to top them off.

The train was easily seen when it returned from Boston and my brothers and sisters used to watch for it. When the train left the station in Woronoco the men in the baggage car started moving the produce for Russell up to the door. If the jug was aboard, it was there also.

Somehow the crew had found out that my folks lived in that particular house and if the jug was aboard the engineer would blow the whistle when they rounded the bend at the foot of Whipperton Hill and the youngsters who were watching would wave. My mother would also wave to let them know she had seen the train.

Here is where my oldest brother Ralph's duties began, for it was one of his jobs to go to the station and get that jug of molasses before it got broken.

I often wonder how many trips to Boston that jug made. Quite a few, I imagine, for Mother did all her own baking and a gallon did not last long. We also used it on pancakes, and when we had colds she would make us candy with a small amount of paragoric in it. She made an excellent cough syrup of it, too.

You sweet old jug, what stories you could tell. Where are you now?

\* \* \*

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*“Along the country roadside, stone on stone,  
Past waving grain-field, and near broken stile,  
The walls stretch onward....”*

- Julie Mathilde Lippmann

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